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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 AMMAN 001289

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/19/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KISL](#) [JO](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: SHIITE INSIDER DISCUSSES IRAQI POLITICAL
RELATIONSHIPS, SUGGESTS OUTREACH TO SISTANI

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DAVID HALE, REASONS: 1.4 (B &D)

Summary

[11.](#) (C) London-based Al-Khoei Foundation Director Ghanem Jawad gave Emboff a run-down on past political intrigues and current political ambitions of several prominent Iraqi political figures, including Ahmed Chalabi, Ibrahim Ja'afari, Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, and Jalal Talabani. Jawad Ja'afari's support from Moqtada al-Sadr in part to an alleged promise by Ja'afari to engineer the dropping of all charges against Sadrites (including Moqtada's nephew) for the 2003 Najaf murder of Abdel Majid al-Khoei. Jawad also suggested that Ja'afari's PM candidacy is not too pleasing to Ayatollah Sistani, and speculated that some in 555 may privately work to undermine Ja'afari's ability to form a new government. While acknowledging that he had not "pre-cleared" this suggestion with Sistani, Jawad recommended that U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Khalilzad consider sending a private letter to Sistani outlining U.S. goals in Iraq, and perhaps seek arrangements for periodic confidential USG consultations with a Sistani-nominated associate outside Iraq. End Summary.

[12.](#) (C) Emboff met on February 12 with London-based Al-Khoei Foundation Director Ghanim Jawad, a prominent member of the anti-Saddam opposition, long-time USG contact close to circles around the Ayatollah Sistani, and the former assistant and confidante of 'Abdel Majid al-Khoei, murdered in Najaf in 2003, allegedly on the orders of Moqtada al-Sadr. Jawad maintains close personal contacts with many key Shiite and Kurdish figures, ranging from Ahmed Chalabi (with whom he lived for several years) to the circle around Ayatollah Sistani. During the conversation, Jawad made the following comments:

Ahmed Chalabi

[13.](#) (C) Jawad claimed that Ahmed Chalabi is hoping to continue his current role as a de facto "Energy Czar" overseeing the Ministries of Oil and Electricity in the new government. Jawad claimed that Chalabi wants to use this position to recapture the confidence of the USG, and develop a new "pro-Chalabi" lobby in the U.S. based on support from major oil companies. In this context, Jawad said, Chalabi will actively support energy sector privatization and seek to promote U.S. corporate interests. Jawad added that Chalabi is also attracted to this lucrative sector as a source for personal gain, but called this secondary to the above plan. According to Jawad, Chalabi wants to replace Iyad Allawi as the USG's "favorite" Iraqi, and feels like "a fish out of water" without USG support.

[14.](#) (C) Jawad said that Chalabi is close to some Iranian figures, and said that Chalabi has long been impressed by the

Iranians' cleverness and sophistication in pursuing their goals. Jawad added that Chalabi has been flirting with Iranian officials since at least the mid-1990's. According to Jawad, in the 1990,s Chalabi worked with Aras Habib, a Kurdish Shiite, to facilitate Iranian intelligence infiltration into Iraq, most of which (Jawad said) targeted the Mujahideen al-Khalq. Jawad claimed that Chalabi had mused to him in the past about becoming a mediator between the Americans and the Iranians (specifically the Rafsanjani circle), but never won the Iranians, confidence, and may have given up this goal for now as impracticable. Jawad stressed that he considers Chalabi a close personal - but not political - friend. He claimed that Chalabi has great gifts but is completely self-serving, and endorsed the joke that "Ahmed Chalabi knows exactly what needs to be done, and will do exactly the opposite."

Ja'afari and al-Hakim

15. (C) Jawad claimed that Ja'afari and al-Hakim have a deep-seated, intense dislike for each other that goes back to the 1980's, when both were exiles in Iran. According to Jawad, Ja'afari was involved in a plot to smear Al-Hakim,s brother, Ayatollah Mohammed Bakr al-Hakim, to the Iranians as an agent of Saddam (Jawad claimed that the Iranians were already suspicious of al-Hakim because he had cooperated with the Shah). Jawad said that Ayatollah Khamenei, who then had responsibility for the Iraq portfolio, ordered the arrest of al-Hakim's chief assistant, who was imprisoned for a month before the truth came out that there was no substance to the allegation.

16. (C) Jawad claimed that this incident, not ideological

AMMAN 00001289 002 OF 003

objections to the Islamic state (as he claims), is what led to Ja'afari's exit from Iran and relocation to London. According to Jawad, subsequent attention from the US and the UK governments ultimately helped Ja'afari re-establish himself in Iranian eyes as a useful political leader.

Ja'afari and Talabani

17. (C) Jawad traced alleged bad blood between Jalal Talabani and Ja'afari to an incident in 1999, in which Talabani felt manipulated and tricked by Ja'afari at an opposition meeting. According to Jawad, their relationship started downhill after this meeting and has deteriorated since. Jawad asserted that former Ja'afari aide Laith Kubba is also strongly disliked by Talabani and was recently ejected from his official position and membership in the Ja'afari circle in part as a gesture to Talabani prior to government formation negotiations.

Ja'afari and al-Sadr

18. (C) Jawad claimed that some time ago, Ja'afari recruited al-Sadr political associate Baha al-Araji to be his representative within the al-Sadr bloc. Araji, whom he said used to operate a shoe shop, was won over by a combination of money and promised help with the freeing of his brother, Hazem al-Araji, who was a prisoner of the coalition forces. Jawad said that al-Araji has since been quite open in his advocacy of an alliance between al-Sadr and Ja'afari, to the extent that Moqtada al-Sadr jokingly refers to him as "Baha Ja'afari." According to Jawad, the deal that won Ja'afari the al-Sadr group's support for the Prime Ministership consists of three to four ministries, distribution of millions of dollars to al-Sadr associates, plus a promise to quash (including through subvention of witnesses) all charges against al-Sadr supporters for the murder of 'Abdel Majid al-Khoei, and the release of Moqtada's former chief assistant and his nephew from prison. (Embassy Baghdad Comment: Jawad

is not a disinterested observer in the al-Khoei murder case.
End Embassy Baghdad Comment).

Jaffari as Prime Minister

¶9. (C) Jawad expressed dismay at the designation of Ja'afari as the 555 candidate for PM, (although he did not like Abdel Mahdi either for this post). He said that Ja'afari never listens to anyone, and "can't even run a cabinet meeting," much less a government. Jawad claimed that Ayatollah Sistani was also unlikely to be pleased with this result, as Sistani wants someone who can bring together all Iraqis into an effective government, and feels that Ja'afari can't do this. Jawad opined that Fadhila party leader Nadim al-Jabiri would have been the best choice, but said that Sistani cannot endorse him even indirectly due to a conflict with Jabiri, s spiritual mentor Ayatollah al-Yaqubi, a former chemical engineer whom, Jawad said, Sistani believes is not qualified to hold the title of Ayatollah. Jawad speculated that some in the 555 coalition, including al-Hakim and Jawad al-Maliki within Da'wa, will be privately pleased if Ja'afari ultimately fails to form a government.

Recommended USG Approach to Sistani

¶10. (C) While Jawad asserted that "the Ayatollah Sistani is not opposed to U.S. objectives in Iraq," he cautioned that "many factors affect his thinking," including an alleged close relationship between his son and Iran. Jawad recommended that U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Khalilzad draft a confidential letter to Sistani in Arabic outlining the U.S.

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agenda and strategic goals for Iraq, and requesting Sistani's opinion. Jawad suggested that this letter be hand-delivered directly to Sistani through the Ayatollah Hussein Sadr of Baghdad. Jawad said that preliminary talks on this approach should be opened by the U.S. Embassy with Ayatollah al-Sadr to choreograph what Jawad opined could be a significant and constructive exchange of letters. Jawad suggested that we also use this or a similar trustworthy channel to seek regular consultations through a person designated by Sistani to meet with US officials on a regular basis outside Iraq. Note: Jawad characterized this proposal as his own idea, and said that it was not "pre-cleared" with Ayatollah al-Sadr or Sistani. End Note.

Bio Notes

¶11. (C) Ghanem Jawad was the Iraqi National Congress's

AMMAN 00001289 003 OF 003

(INC's) first human rights coordinator. He subsequently left the INC, he claims over Chalabi, s leadership style, though he retains his personal friendship with Chalabi, with whom he lived in the 1990's in Iraqi Kurdistan. Jawad currently supports Iyad Allawi politically. Jawad took Laith Kubba, s place at the al-Khoe, i Foundation when Kubba came to the United States in 1995-1996. Ghanem shared 'Abdel Majid al-Khoei, s vision of moderate democracy with the support of personally religious Iraqis, and (as a result of al-Khoei's murder) is strongly opposed to Muqtada al-Sadr. Ghanem, s daughter works for a foundation associated with the British Foreign Office; his sister is a professor at Baghdad University in the same faculty as Nadim al-Jabiri, and according to Jawad, sometimes serves as an informal go-between between him and al-Jabiri.

¶12. (U) This message was coordinated with Embassy Baghdad.
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